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IN THE UNITED STATES,

OF

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS

IN THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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S E R M O N XLIII.

TRUE RELIGION.

B Y

ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

Minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Newark, New-Jersey.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

THE Saviour of the world, in the dawning of the gospel, predicted, *that there should arise false Christs and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.* That men should cry, some, *Lo, here is Christ!* and others, *Lo, there!* This prophecy, for the confirmation of the truth of Christianity, has been fulfilled in every period of the Christian era. But perhaps, in no season and in no part of the globe, hath it received stronger illustration, than it doth in the present time in this western world. Has there been an age in

which greater numbers of sects and parties, and variations of parties, have existed than the present? Yet, if there be any in this assembly in these desultory days of levity, wandering, separation and unsteadiness, who are sincerely seeking religion, and desiring to know wherein it consists, or what it is, here is an infallible description of it, given by the inspired apostle James. A man who had sweet experience of its power, and a certain understanding of its happy effects. The apostle in this chapter, in order more strongly to shew wherein true religion lies, points out many deviations from it in its professors; and at length, more fully and clearly to characterize it, he introduces two sorts of wisdom; *a wisdom which descendeth not from above; and a wisdom that is from above.*

The former wisdom which is from beneath, he thus delineates. It is *earthly, sensual and devilish*. This, with propriety, may be styled *carnal wisdom*, or a *delusive religion*, which like the hypocrite's hope, will fail its possessor, when God takes away his soul. This wisdom is described in its origin and fruits. Its source is negatively intimated. *It descendeth not from above*, that is, from heaven, or from God; therefore, the fountain of it must be in earth, or hell, or both. Its delineation fully declares this, when it is affirmed to be *earthly and devilish*. It is carnal, worldly, covetous, hoarding. Whatever garb it may put on; it secretly hates nobleness, generosity, charity and kindness. *It is sensual; propense*

to all fleshly gratifications, to intemperance, slothfulness, and uncleanness, as far as these sensual indulgences may not be checked or prohibited by the superior influence of meanness and avarice. *It is devilish*, malicious, cunning, crafty and deceitful. This is the nature of that wisdom or religion which is from beneath. What other streams can be supposed to flow from such a source, than those St. James mentions, to wit, bitter envyings, strife, boasting and falsehood? Envyings, with strict justness, are termed bitter, because they are so in their operation and consequences. Envy, what a bitter corroding passion! Solomon of old, pronounced it, *the rottenness of the bones!* It is like scaled bones making their way through ulcerated flesh. Envy sometimes gives uneasiness to its object, but always torments the breast in which it is harbored. What stage in life is free from this unhappy temper? The great envy the greater; the middling rank those before it; the poor, the rich, the foolish, the wise; and the lowest class of the human species has a thousand objects, against which their feeble envy is directed, and from which it rebounds to invigorate their misery.

Strife, is the next fruit of this carnal religion, and it receives in all its exertions, strong reinforcements from envy. *Where strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. He loveth transgression, that loveth strife.* It is aided by pride, and their combination often create a world of mischief.

Who can enumerate the evils which strife introduces into families, neighborhoods, congregations, towns, and even nations? Alienation of affections, reproaches, slander, wars and bloodshed, generally take their origin from strife and envy.

Boasting is another effect of this inferior wisdom. *Glory not*, saith our apostle. He well knew how congenial *boasting* or *glorying* is to our nature, from whence it springs; and it is of the highest importance to be guarded against it. Of all kinds of boasting, there is none produces a more loathsome odium than a person's boasting of his religion.

The apostle mentions falsehood as a further fruit of this unhappy earthly and sensual religion. *Lie not against the truth*. Lying is a base vice, but never more so, than when it falls from the lips of high professors, or is accompanied with the appearances of great sanctity.

Having thus described the religion that is from beneath, the inspired penman proceeds to direct our attention to another sort of wisdom in the words of our text. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*.

The term wisdom, in scripture, is frequently used to express precisely the same thing that we mean by religion. This is generally the use of it in the Proverbs of Solomon, and in his other writ-

ings. The psalmist employs it for the same purpose when he says, *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; that we may devote ourselves to the study and practice of true religion.—This is the evident sense of it in this chapter, and especially in this verse before us. The reason, perhaps, why the inspired writers chose so often to express religion by the word wisdom was, because real religion or piety consists greatly in knowledge, discretion, and prudence, which are the eminent constituents of what we commonly call wisdom. Knowledge is so essential a part of religion, that it is said, *They who know God are born of him*; and, *Those who know Jesus Christ have life eternal*. Mere knowledge is not sufficient of itself to constitute wisdom without prudence and discretion also. It is not every knowing man that is a wise man. It is not enough for a man to have a large share of religious knowledge in speculation, but he must be able, and actually make a right improvement and application of his knowledge, in order either to be truly wise or good. A person must not merely be acquainted in theory with the character of God, the nature of his government, the fall and sinfulness of man, the method of salvation by a glorious Redeemer, &c. but the knowledge of these things must have a suitable influence upon his heart and life, so that his temper, disposition, and practice are reduced to the obedience of the gospel. When his knowledge is directed by prudence and discretion, in

such a manner, whereby he becomes employed in holy exercises and holy duties, then may he be properly denominated wise or religious. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.* Indeed, none in a scriptural sense, can be deemed truly wise or knowing, who have not acquainted themselves with God—who have not known and felt their deplorable state by nature and practice—who have not cordially acquiesced in the plan of salvation, revealed in the gospel, and devoted themselves to godly contemplations, and to the works of righteousness. All the knowledge, besides this, which the world styles wisdom, is foolishness with God.

Having mentioned these few things to manifest that the term wisdom, in our text, expresses the same idea with the phrase true religion, I shall now proceed to consider its origin and fruits, as they are here exhibited before us.

First, we are here taught, that true religion is from above. It is of a heavenly and divine original; it cometh down from the Father of Lights. All who are sanctified are said to be the workmanship of God, whose glorious and principle dwelling is in the heavens. Christ Jesus, the great author of religion, came down from above. The Holy Ghost, the comforter and sanctifier of all that believe, descendeth from on high. The oracles of truth—the words of eternal life—the law and the

gospel are likewise from the same source: Holy men, by the inspired influences of heaven, were moved to write and speak those things. When God is pleased to make effectual application of his word or providences to the awakening and conversion of a soul, this precious grace descends from above. Thus all wisdom, religion, grace, and goodness are of a heavenly and divine original; and that, which is from any other fountain, is not that religion or wisdom which will save the soul. Hence it is said, *The Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.* But this being a thing generally allowed, that all true religion proceeds from God, or descends from above, I would not spend time in laboring this point, but proceed to consider its nature and fruits, as here described.

We have it represented to our view in eight branches or particulars; a shining groupe of constituents. All the heathen writers combined could not produce such a constellation of virtues. He, who laboriously cons their mighty works, will nowhere find such a collection; and when he has turned over and spread abroad their mountains of rubbish, no such beautiful gems strike his eager sight! Attend to the divine description. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

The first constituent or branch of true religion, or that wisdom which is from above, is *purity*. It

is *first pure*, without any undue mixture of maxims or aims that would debase it—it is free from gross iniquities or moral defilements—not allowing habitually of any known sin, but studious of virtue and holiness, in all manner of conversation. The original word, which is here rendered *pure*, signifies also *chaste* and *modest*; therefore this term expresses a sweet, modest, decent, chaste, and pure deportment, arising from right principles and proper views. When true religion is here characterized as *pure*, we must not from hence conceive that a religious person is instantly made *perfect*, that he feels no more the motions of corrupt inclinations and affections; and is no longer guilty of sin, but only that he receives a pure principle or bias, whereby he is enabled to check his evil propensities, to govern and restrain his corruptions, so that sin hath no longer that dominion over him which it formerly held. This principle, received in regeneration, tends to fill the soul with desires after, and will at last issue in, perfection. Some may here refer to the interrogation of the royal preacher, saying, *Who can say my heart is clean? I am pure from my sin?* It is a sad and humiliating truth, there is none doth good perfectly, no not one—there are none whose hearts or lives are completely clean or perfectly free from sin, yet through the boundless riches of divine grace, there are many who can rejoice in God, who giveth them the victory over their corruptions, and enables them to foil their spiritual adversaries. As none ought to carry their

opinions of religious purity to so great a height as perfection in this life, on the other hand, every one may easily observe, that there is something more intended hereby than a bare abstinence from the outward and gross acts of criminal sensuality. There is more meant than an unimpeached character or a fair external behavior before men. Men may be, and often are outwardly orderly and regular in their carriage, and yet possess no real and vital piety.— Our Lord speaks of some who had this beautiful and ornamented conduct, that were the reverse of sincerity and purity. He represents them under the strong figure of *whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness*. Wherefore they, who are the subjects of this purity which descendeth from above, are first made pure in heart. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are the undefiled in the way, &c.* These look upon all intemperance, injustice, dishonesty, and sensuality as forbidden by God, warring against the soul, condemned by the gospel of Christ Jesus, and standing in arrayed opposition against their eternal interest. The fear of God, love to the precious Redeemer, a pleasure and delight in propriety, integrity and uprightness, lead them to hate evil. A fixed aversion of the soul from iniquity, is a cardinal constituent of true purity. The hearts, the thoughts, and inclinations of the careless and secure, are entirely disposed to sinful pleasures, and sensual gratifications. They are governed by pride, am-

• bition, covetousness, custom, inconsideration, vanity, or some base lust or other. Hearken to St. Peter's declaration, *Their eyes are full of adultery, and they cannot cease from sin.* Or shall we go farther back into antiquity and retail the account found there; *Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil continually.* But when true religion enters the soul, and takes possession of it, another turn to the temper, bias and disposition is given. The thoughts and inclinations of the heart become now prevailingly fixed upon God and divine things, upon the honor of Jesus, the advancement of his kingdom, and their own immortal interests. The breathings of the newborn soul are, *Lord, create in me a clean heart, and make me of pure hands.* They are now full of holy purposes, desires, and wishes. They long for the entire mortification of the deeds of the flesh, to yield themselves up soul and body to the service of God, and to be holy and perfect as he is holy and perfect. The heart being thus initiated into purity by the incorruptable seed of divine principles sown from above, true religion will then display itself in a purity of life, by avoiding those things, which may dishonor God, wound the conscience, or injure the sacred cause of real piety. Its votaries will avoid, as far as possible, all loose, profane, and vicious company. They will not take the abandoned, and notoriously wicked for their chosen companions. They will hate the stains on the forehead, and the garments spotted by the flesh.

They will be governed by a dictate of common sense, arising from the gleam of nature's light, when the same is adopted and confirmed by divine counsel, knowing by experience, *That evil communication corrupts good manners.* Intemperate passions, inordinate appetites, they will diligently guard against. Drunkenness, with all its beastly train, they will carefully shun. The exhortation of our Saviour, with a sweet and an abiding influence, rests upon their minds. *Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness.* The impurity of revelling, rioting; the baseness of chambering, and wanton looks, wanton hints, words and behaviour, must not put the present theme of modesty and chastity to the blush. Every thing which wears the aspect of uncleanness, dishonor, dishonesty and unrighteousness, will be objects of their peculiar detestation. A ribaldry of conversation will be the abhorrence of their souls; they will not indulge themselves in filthy communication or filthy speaking, nor will they patiently bear it in others. Railing, whispering, backbiting, reviling and slandering, wound their pure feelings. They cannot allow their own tongues this unkind and unchristian latitude, and their souls are often pained with such ebullitions from the mouths of others. Their desire is so pure, that they would wish to speak evil of none; and when they are called by authority, or a just occasion, it is with uneasiness they undertake the disagreeable task. Your talking,

glorying, boasting, fault-finding professors, who deal around them an unbridled tongue in rash judgments, censures, obloquy, pious hints, religious innuendos, lamentable reports, and ear-whispered dirty tales, are base Christians, and nuisances in society, both civil and ecclesiastical. They are the reverse of that modesty, purity and chastity, here so beautifully recommended. The constituent branch, the essential nature, or the first fruit of true religion, or the wisdom which descends from above is, that it is *pure*. Wherefore, *having great and precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit: Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded.*

The second line in this beautiful picture of true religion is, that it is *peaceable*. First pure, then peaceable. Peace follows after spiritual purity, stands connected with it, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise, will endeavor to preserve peace where it exists, restore it where it is broken, and recover it where it is lost. Peace, how charming, how entertaining, and captivating to the pure mind! In families, neighborhoods and societies, where this heavenly wisdom governs men, it renders them peaceable. The distinguished features of a truly religious man are, that he is peaceable, and a peace-maker; he loves peace; peace is his atmosphere; he dwells in peace; and the benign rays of peace flow from him as beams from the sun. Our exalted Mediator, styled the

wisdom of the Father, is called our peace. An honorable branch of the name of the Most High is, that he is the God of peace. True peace is the purchase of Christ Jesus, and an effect of the operation of the spirit of grace. The great design of heaven, in the whole scheme of our redemption, was to accomplish and promote peace; peace between an offended God and offending man; peace of conscience; and peace between the children of men. The great blessedness of the celestial state is, that all is harmonious, tranquil and peaceable there. We are commanded, *as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men. Follow peace and holiness without which no man can see the Lord.* The truly religious are not addicted to strifes and contentions; they do not indulge boisterous passions and furious heats; they are peaceable, being governed by the religion of peace. They neither offer wrong to others, nor bitterly revenge wrong when offered to themselves. They know it to be their wisdom to be harmless and innocent; when they are reviled not to revile again; not to return railing for railing. They have made their peace with God by faith in Christ Jesus—They preserve peace of mind in a diligent discharge of all Christian duties; and endeavor to keep a conscience void of offence. They promote peace among their fellow-men; maintain it in their families, cultivate it in their neighborhoods; and the establishment of it in church and state, affords them the highest pleasure. They are opposed to schisms, rents and divisions.

They well know that *Cain*, who separated himself, and went out from the presence of God, had a mark set upon him: as also those mentioned by St. Jude, who separated themselves, were branded with being *sensual, not having the spirit*. They attend to the commandments of heaven, which require them *to mark those who cause divisions*. The pious are not only peaceable themselves, but they will be striving to be peace-makers, in order that they may be partakers of the blessings, and interested in the promises of Christ, when he says, *blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God*. From these things, it is manifest, that all are far from true wisdom, who love to live in differences, and cherish contentions; who prefer throwing oil into a flame rather than water. Many seem as if they cared not whether church or state, or society prospered, or was destroyed, provided their corrupt humors might have room to display themselves and be gratified. But, how far is this temper from the religion which is from above!

Thirdly, This heavenly wisdom is *gentle*. The term gentle signifies patient, easy, moderate. It is rendered moderation—Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known to all men*. It is translated patient, 1 Tim. iii. 3. It disposes men to treat others with kindness, openness and candor; to bear with their infirmities; to pass over many injuries as if unnoticed; to forgive offences; and to interpret all things for the best. It is a sweet, equal and

placid spirit. Gentleness stands in opposition to harshness, severity, cruelty, incivility and acrimony. To be gentle, is not to stand upon the extremity of right, not to be punctiliously rigorous in fractions of property, not censorious in judging, not furious in opinion, not rude or overbearing in conversation. He, who is governed by this gentle and heavenly religion, will be fair, calm and equal. He will not kindle into a flame about the precise and perfect boundaries of righteousness with those with whom he has dealings; he will yield in doubtful and smaller matters, and recede in some things from what he imagines his right, for the sake of love and peace. Virtue and vice stand strongly and eternally distinguished one from another, yet the exact time of separation cannot certainly be determined in a thousand instances. Virtue and vice in this respect may be compared to the colors of the rainbow, which are strikingly discriminated, yet to fix the perfect line of distinction between color and color, or mark where the one color ends and the other begins, is impossible to the keenest eye, and the most accurate observer. We are commanded *not to be righteous overmuch*. The truly gentle man will be avoiding bitter, unnecessary and rigorous censures. He will be putting the most candid, charitable and favorable constructions upon the foibles and weaknesses of others that they will possibly bear. Gentleness, like charity, hopeth all things, believeth all things, and covereth a multitude of failings. Where differences in senti-

ments take place, he will not wilfully urge his own opinions beyond their weight, nor wrest his adversary's beyond their intention. He will carefully shun, as far as possible, all vain disputings and wranglings. He will not set himself as the standard of rectitude and perfection, engrossing all conversation where he comes, and deciding as a mighty judge in every matter. He is rather ready to let his moderation and gentleness be known to all, in all things ; patiently and sweetly instructing them who oppose themselves, and receiving with all tenderness the weak in faith, tho' not to doubtful disputations. Wherefore let us all put on the ornament of a meek, quiet, patient, moderate and gentle spirit. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

Fourthly, the wisdom which is from above is *easy to be entreated*. It is of an ingenuous facility, and disposes the subject of it to be readily persuaded or prevailed upon to forsake that which is evil and to follow that which is good. It is true, there is an easiness and persuasibleness which is culpable and base, but it is not a blamable pliability to yield ourselves to the persuasions of divine truth, and to the just desires and reasonable requests of our fellow-creatures. Many are so self-willed, obstinate and perverse, that they will not relinquish their purpose, when others around them imagine that they must, and do feel the glaring conviction. *A fool in his own conceit is wiser than seven*

men who can render a reason. But all those whose hearts have been rendered docile, tractable, and easy to be entreated by divine grace, are of a very different temper. Although they are determinately fixed in their aversion from that which is sinful, yet they are easily entreated to receive divine truth, and readily submit to their duty. The unjust judge himself was recommended, in a sort, by our Lord, for his being won by the widow's importunity. The religious will easily yield to the entreaties of others when better reason is discovered. Job would not despise the counsel of his servant—Moses was persuaded by the advice of Jethro—and David was prevailed upon by the entreaties of a woman. Many, after sufficient conviction of what is right is administered to them, will not drop their purpose, but either with a sulky obstinacy, or an outrageous fury, adhere to their assertions. But those who are made wise from on high, are not self-willed, but easily entreated.

Fifthly, the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy. The truly pious are disposed to every thing that is kind, benevolent, charitable, and good; feel compassion for the miserable—inclined to relieve those that want, and to forgive those who offend. Some are ready to apprehend clemency a disgrace, as if it argued men void of fortitude and spirit; but in the divine judgment it is quite the reverse; *It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression!* It is Christianity to pardon and for-

give, but it is grossly wicked to be malicious and revengeful. The religious man will feel a tender compassion for transgressors, easily pass over and forgive offences offered to him. He thinks of his own innumerable trespasses against God, for which he hopes for compassion and forgiveness, and that it would be enormously cruel in him, not to forgive the little trespasses of his brethren of mankind. A Christian sympathy arises in his soul, when he beholds objects of distress. At seasons he enters into the feelings, pains, and sickness of the afflicted. He does not avoid the chambers of anguish. He submits to the force of this divine counsel; *To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend.* In a special manner, when he perceives any poor or in want, he will not be over inquisitive how they came into such circumstances, but his soul will be drawn out to deal his bread to the hungry, according to his ability and their necessity. *Who so hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* He who is wise to salvation knows, on the one hand, the benediction which Christ pronounced—*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;* and on the other, he trembles at the denunciation of our apostle—*They shall have judgment without mercy, who have shewed no mercy.* Therefore, my brethren, let us be all attention to the exhortation of St. Paul to the Colossians—*As the elect of God, put on bowels of mercy.*

The *sixth* constituent of true religion is, that it is *full of good fruits. Full of mercy and good fruits.*—The description rises upon us. Religion is not a barren tree, but brings forth in abundance; and the fruits which it produces are good; such as promote the glory of God, and the highest interest and happiness of man. *Herein, saith our Lord to his followers, is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.* By good fruits are undoubtedly meant all the outward duties of piety and righteousness which we owe to God and our neighbor. Thus religion will always produce morality and good works. In vain we make a show of religion and hope for the blessings of it without good morals. Good works are essential to true religion in all adult persons. The latter cannot exist without the former. *Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may be induced to glorify their Father which is in heaven.* This is the great end of their renovation or conversion. *They are the workmanship of God, created unto good works.* This was a principal design of Christ's coming into the world—of his humiliation and passion, that *he should purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Hence it is absolutely certain, that the subjects of this heavenly religion must be, in some considerable measure, habitually adorned with good fruits.

A *seventh* property of this excellent wisdom is, that it is *without partiality.* The Greek term sig-

nifies being without a partial, wrangling, suspicious, judging temper; so that there is no English word fully expressive of the original. The really pious will not be guilty of base wrangling, undue surmises, or unreasonable suspicions; they will not be given to hasty or partial judging, respecting persons, through outward splendor or party affection. They are not such as those described by St. Jude, *who have men's persons in admiration because of advantage*. They do not suspiciously enquire into the faults of others, nor deal partially among men. They esteem and treat every one according to his apprehended worth, and carry themselves superior to the mean spirit of partiality, uncandid conjecture, and destructive censoriousness. Uprightness, integrity, candor, and honor attend them in all their commerce with mankind. But,

Eightly, The last branch of this beautiful delineation of true religion is, that it is *without hypocrisy*. It wears no mask, disguise or deceitfulness. Those managements and practices which the world count wise, consisting in craft and guile, it cannot away with. It is sincere, open, steady, and uniform and consistent with itself. Carnal men oftentimes pretend to be what they are not; and many of them for strange purposes will pretend to be religious, but they cannot possibly hold out, or act uniformly to the end; and when the irregularity of their conduct flashes the conviction of absurdity and inconsistency upon them, they will sometimes

drop the mask and appear what they always really were. But the truly good man's principal care is, to be what he seems—The desires of his heart are to be devoted to God in Christ in sincerity—to walk in duty with a true mind, and to do the things which are honest in the sight of all men. He intends not, by a profession of Christianity, to impose upon God, the church, or mankind. His love to God and his neighbor is without dissimulation, abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good. Honesty and faithfulness dwell with him. Chicanery, cunning, tricking, and artfulness enter not into his habitation. An undissembled sincerity marks all his conduct, and shines in all his conversation. The pure breathings of their hearts are, to be able to say with the great doctor of the Gentiles, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*—Let us see that we have *that faith which is unfeigned, and love not only in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

I proceed to close this subject with a very brief improvement.

1. It must awaken in every mind sentiments of sorrow and lamentation. Alas! if these things be so, how small the number of the truly pious or good! How few, how very few can the most ex-

tensive charity observe, who are *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy!* May we not justly take up the lamentation of the weeping prophet, and say, *O that our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night, over the slain of the daughter of our people; over decayed love, loose morals, and wasted religion!* Is it not a melancholy truth, that many in all the assemblies of our people are *treacherous men; they bend their tongues like their bow for lies; they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and know not me, saith the Lord?* What serious mind, without pain, can contemplate mankind, and behold one wallowing in all impurities, another governed by angry and peace-destroying passions; one addicted to knavery and dishonesty; a second outraging the sacred laws of truth; a third indulging himself in gross intemperance; a fourth belching out torrents of profanity, &c. Tears ran down the Psalmist's eyes when he beheld men transgressing God's law. How should true Christians mourn over the abominations which every where, almost, abound in these days of degeneracy!

2. This doctrine naturally leads us to examine and try ourselves, whether we possess that wisdom which comes down from above, or whether we are the subjects of true religion as described in the divine oracles. God has issued this injunction, *Try*

your own selves. Wherefore, let us bring ourselves to this touchstone of sincerity. Of what sort is our religion? Is it the *wisdom* from beneath, which is *earthly, sensual, devilish, full of envy, malice, confusion, and every evil work?* Or, is it the *wisdom that descendeth from above, that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* Our Saviour affirms, *The tree is known by his fruits.* What fruits does our religion produce? Let us solemnly bring ourselves to this doctrine, as to a criterion, by which we may learn our real state and character.

Are we *pure*? Are our hearts purified by divine grace? Are we opposed in heart to sin, and do we abhor all moral defilements? Do we avoid evil company, vicious conversation, and prohibited indulgences? Do we delight in God; meditate on things holy and spiritual; striving to keep our minds pure and pious? Is Christ Jesus, and the way of salvation through faith in his blood precious to us?

Are we *peaceable*? Cultivating peace with God; following the things which make for peace among mankind; maintaining peace in our consciences, families, neighborhood and church? Do we avoid wrath, angry disputations and contention?

Are we *gentle*? Are we moderate, patient, meek, modest, harmless and inoffensive?

Are we *easy to be entreated*? Easily persuaded to that which is rational, decent, just and proper? Are we readily induced to forsake that which is wrong, and to practice that which is good?

Are we *full of mercy*? Tender, kind, and compassionate? Ready to forgive those that offend, to pity the wicked, feel for the distressed, and relieve the poor and miserable?

Are we full of *good fruits*? Do we make it an object of our attention to do good to all as we have opportunity? Are we diligent and careful in the performance of duty towards God and man? Are we doing justly, loving righteousness and practicing *strict* honesty? Are we rich in good works, and do others seeing our works glorify God?

Are we *without partiality*? Are we free from groundless suspicions, evil surmisings, rash judgments, underhand dealings, sinister and partial decisions? When we are called to speak or act, do we perform our duty without favor or affection?

Are we all this, *without hypocrisy*? Are we what we seem to be, or what we profess and pretend? Are we, as far as we know our own hearts, unfeigned and sincere in all our conduct before God and man?

What matter do these reflections afford for humiliation, repentance and amendment? Those who

have ground of hope towards God, let them be quickened to increase in every Christian virtue, and in every branch of piety. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Let hypocrites drop their masks, and impure sinners awake to consideration. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

